

Customary Leaders of North Mollo in Timor Visit UGM


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Rector of UGM, Prof. Ir.Panut Mulyono, M.Eng., D.Eng., has received 9 representatives from six villages in North Mollo sub-district, Timur Tengah Selatan regency in East Nusa Tenggara on Friday (22/9). They are the customary leaders of villages of Lelobatan, Fatumnasi, Nefokoko, Fatukoko, Ajaobaki and Tune whose villages that had implemented cultural school programme developed by UGM for the past three years. To the Rectors, the customary leaders asked for the sustainability of such programme as it was considered as successful to rejuvenate the tradition of Mollo ethnic group that had been abandoned so far.

Markus Lakke, 65, from Nefokoko village, said the Mollo cultural values had not been sustained earlier that had caused its almost extinction state. But the arrival of the UGM team through the cultural school concept had motivated the local people to re-juvenate their own cultures. "UGM has helped us explore and sustain our almost extinct tradition," he said.

Similarly, Arid Oematan, 33, from Tune village said his village authorities had started to allocate funds for cultural activities. "Some funds of village budget have been disbursed to purchase arts equipment," he said, adding that they had also introduced welcome dance to early education students.



The cultural school program is an effort to raise the traditional culture as well as offer the conflict resolution concept and nature sustainability conservation through culture and customary laws strengthening. One of the initiators of the School, Dr. Muhadi Sugiono, said their arrival to the villages was to do research into women's role in conflict resolution when a conflict arose related to the refusal among the local people of marble mining in the mountains of Fatunausus, a sacred place for the Mollo people.

"When we communicated with the people, they said they had feared the local cultural tradition would go extinct with the marble mining activities. They later expected UGM to find a solution, hence the cultural school," said Muhadi.

Muhadi said such conflict had arisen due to government's ignorance of local traditional values that regard the mountains highly as a symbol of family names. Currently, only six villages are involved in the school, but Muhadi hoped other 12 villages in North Molo sub-district can be motivated, too. The cultural school can also be the model of cultural arts and culture development towards customary village.

Rector of UGM appreciated the team that for three years had assisted the local people. To the customary leaders, the Rector promised to sustain the cultural school programme, even to dispatch students for community service programme there. "UGM will continue to assist sustaining the local customs and culture and we will dispatch our students for community service programme annually," he said, adding "hopefully, the Timor region can flourish but still retain their cultural roots not to be awashed by modernity," he said.

North Mollo sub-district is an isolated area situated on 2,500 meters above sea level surface. It lacks in infrastructure and facilities such as road and bridges, some villages are even unelectrified. Most residents are farmers that grow corn and roots. Their intention to sustain their culture and natural resource needs to be appreciated.

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